

Views from the Pews – Christ the King

Today is the last Sunday of the Church's year, the traditional culmination of the story of God's salvation from the beginning to the end of time. In these uncertain times, as indeed in moments of crisis throughout history, our natural anxieties can be quietened if we think about higher and more permanent things. One that seems particularly reassuring right now is the biblical proclamation that whatever is going wrong in the world cannot ultimately defeat God's sovereign will.

Our lives are not nearly as uncomfortable as were those of the people living under the Roman occupation in first-century Judaea, yet that was the precise moment when Jesus began to proclaim that God had better things in mind for us. Take a few moments to opt out of 21st century stress and allow God's message to calm your frazzled nerves. Consider the questions that naturally arise from a deep engagement with the Biblical perspective, especially as described in today's Gospel.

Pilate was impressed by the calm, kingly dignity of his prisoner, and saw no threat in his harmless, other-worldly ideas. He tried hard to acquit him. But those among the crowd most excited by the Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem, and the prospect of an imminent military victory led by squadrons of angels, were suddenly disheartened when Jesus was condemned, yet no such rescue came. They redirected their rage and disappointment onto him. The chief priests who saw in him a threat to themselves and to Judaism as it was reconstituted after the Exile, especially to the reconstructed Temple and their independence as a subject nation under the Romans, poured on him concentrated, self-righteous hatred disguised as patriotism. Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.'

Pilate's unjust condemnation of the Lord of Life turned out to be part of God's plan of salvation - the only way by which evil could be defeated. Now, as then, against all our fears and apprehensions, by the grace of God we find ourselves embraced by the Christ "who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Let's try to rediscover the transforming effect of starting every day by thinking about God's long-term view of our problems rather than our own immediate and fearful reactions.

- Kim King